AN INTIMATE VIEW OF JAPAN'S QUAINT CORONATION

Tokio Editor Describes Unique Ceremonies That Accompanied Installation of Emperor

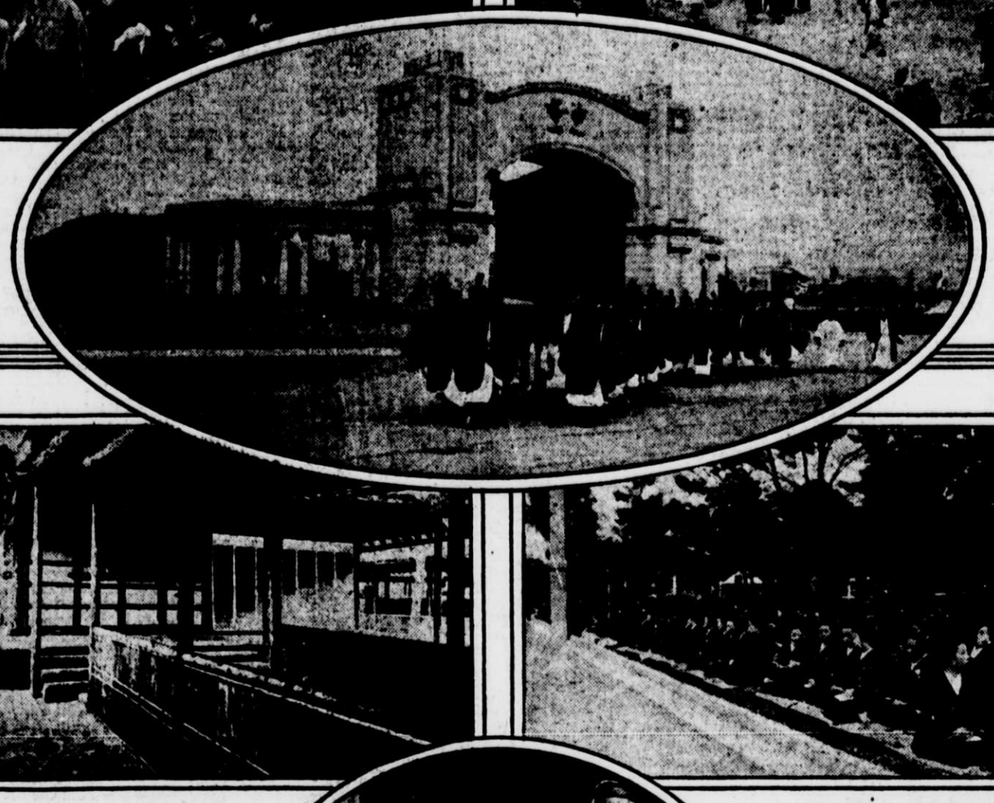
Kyoto, the Picturesque Ancient Capital, a Pageant of Color---The Truly Japanese Crowds

By HUGH BYAS,
Editor of "Japan Advertiser" of Tokio.

AMERICANS are likely in time to see the ceremonies of the coronation of the Emperor of Japan presented at the movies, and indeed I think a visit to the pictures should be recommended as a supplement to this article. The coronation was a series of pictures. There was this difference, however, that the laughing cavaliers and men in armor and festivals of Geisha had all come down from their frames and the gallery had become a world of queer costumes and colors. There is a vast difference between the picture on the screen and the picture off the screen, and I propose in this article to take you on a personally conducted tour of the pageant which is at present Japan.

Crowds cheering the Emperor.
Photo by Paul Thompson.

Coronation Day in Tokio.
Photo by Paul Thompson.



Count and Countess Okuma at the Coronation. Above, in oval—Imperial Sacred Treasures in the Kyoto Procession. Photo by Paul Thompson.

Scene of the offering of first fruits to spirits of Emperor's ancestors.

Women waiting to worship Imperial Coronation Procession in Kyoto.
Photo by Paul Thompson.

I.

The first scene is in Tokio. It was surprising to find rickshaws on a quiet suburban stand at 4:45 A. M., but not more surprising than the discovery that the streets were filled with a stream of these light craft bearing cocked hatted and gold laced functionaries in an endless stream toward the palace gates. It was quite dark. High in the east the new moon hung, a slender sickle, and beneath it was a stirring of the darkness.

As my rickshaw slipped down the hill, ringing a warning bell to the others that bobbed up like ghosts in the darkness, I saw the city below me afire with illuminations, the Emperor's route to the station being marked by immense wreaths of light. We merged in a fuller stream of traffic that flowed along the broad "foreign" street where the Government offices are, and here were the first signs that the Emperor was astir in the form of long lines of policemen, sword at side, paper lantern in hand, who guided—and scrutinized—the passengers. Beside the palace moat we were sorted out according to our degrees of power and glory and sent forward on foot by the same lanterned police.

In two hours the Emperor would leave Tokio for Kyoto to be crowned and possibly half a million of his faithful subjects had spent the night waiting for the procession to pass. The scene along the route before daylight came to rob it of its mystery was an extraordinary one.

The State procession was nine-tenths commonplace, but this hour of darkness with its unpremeditated effects provided the touch of the weird and bizarre which no western country would have furnished. Great masses of troops were visible under the distant light of the illuminated triumphal arches. Officers on horseback came out of the darkness and shouted.

The men right dressed and left dressed, and slowly the picture formed into a great width of road lined by row after row of short, sturdy khaki clad men. Behind the soldiers was a space where privileged spectators like myself walked and where police strolled up and down.

Behind this came pens of less privileged spectators, mostly students and schoolgirls from the Peeresses' School and similar high establishments. Each enclosure was roped off and was distinguished from its neighbors by a paper lantern, and within the ropes the boys or girls squatted with blue faces patiently and cheerfully. Behind these again in a last dim multitude came the people. They were all sitting; they seemed to have been sitting for hours.

At two or three places where I counted them they were thirty deep. These were the thin parts of the crowd. Elsewhere one could only see rank after rank of kneeling forms stretching away into the darkness. A Japanese crowd is one of the sights of an occasion like this. Sometimes it is the sight. It is so quiet, so patient, so silent, and it has such a knack of making itself comfortable. The habit of squatting makes the Japanese a short legged race, but it enables them to put in most of their waiting on public occasions in comfort.

The last stages of the route were lined by Japan's veterans. These are still mostly young men in their thirties. They were dressed in all varieties of garb, from Japanese ceremonial dress to faded uniforms. In some cases evening dress, of a weird and original cut, was worn. We were all, you must understand, in regimentals of some sort except the populace in outer darkness.

The Japanese love uniforms and never miss a chance of wearing them. Those who, like the writer, have no claim to even the uniform of a street car conductor, are obliged to adorn ourselves with frock coats and top hats. The same applies to the Japanese and the result is that on all great occasions the streets of Tokio are like an encyclopædia of fashions for men covering the last quarter of a century.

While this mixed but modern multitude settled down on the processional route a rite was being conducted within the palace which took the participants back to another world. The Imperial shrine was being prepared to accompany the divinely descended Emperor to Kyoto and in the sanctuary a small group of Japanese noblemen and priests of the highest rank were offering oblations of rice and wine and silk to the august spirits whose dwelling the shrine is.

Ritual music was played on primitive reed instruments and after many obeisances the sacred objects from the shrine, the divine mirror, sword and jewel, were reverently placed in a palanquin which sixty-four bearers carried to the station. Next to the Emperor the shrine was the piece de resistance of the procession—to some it may have been an even more anxiously anticipated sight.

The shrine was borne near the head of a procession which otherwise was as modern as it could be. When it was full light the whole picture settled down in motionless expectancy. Half an hour later a police inspector trotted into the open space in front of the station and behind him swept the pageant. All eyes were on the palanquin, covered with gay striped silk and swaying as it was carried by its sixty-four bearers.

The carriers were robed in bright yellow. In front of them four mounted Shinto priests rode, and behind came another group. Lancers of the Imperial Guard formed the escort. When the shrine passed every banner was dipped in the dust and swords and bayonets flashed to the salute as royal honors were paid to the relic of Japan's departed rulers. So in days of old the bones of some great saint been might have been greeted as they were borne through the streets of Rome.

Then followed a number of state carriages of the familiar modern type, and at last in a scarlet coach with a golden phœnix flaming on the roof, the centre of all the solemnity, cynosure of every eye, the Emperor. He sat slightly forward in his seat and looked out on the crowds with an air of keen interest and seemed mentally alert and physically fit.

Not a murmur, not a cheer, not a sound of any description was heard as the imperial carriage passed, for it is with the intense silence of utter devotion that the Japanese love to greet their emperors. More state carriages followed, and in a few minutes the pageant was ended and the great crowd was dissolving in every direction. Presently the guns boomed out a salute and hundreds of rockets went crackling to the sky. The first scene of the drama was over.

Reports in the newspapers afterward told that all day long as his Majesty passed through town and village on his long journey he was greeted by the inhabitants, who turned out en masse and lined up to receive him and the shrine of his ancestors with the same reverent silence. When night fell the light of millions of paper lanterns bearing the red rising sun of Japan glimmered in every village. On every station platform the local dignitaries were drawn up and bowed low as the train flashed through.

II.

Kyoto, the ancient capital, has been the theatre of the great events, but since all of them were held in the rigorous seclusion of an Oriental palace the city and its inhabitants and its visitors have formed but a setting for an unseen gem. A most picturesque setting.

This ancient town lies in a hollow of green hills and wherever you turn you see a pine clad hilltop and the end of the vista. A shallow and very rapid river runs through it and numerous rushing waterways make every district picturesque. The palace, like all such buildings in the East, is hidden away as closely as a harem.

Few things that I have seen are less provocative of curiosity than the low, dingy wall which shuts it in. The park which surrounds it is an agglomeration of nice but negative qualities. It is neither unkempt nor trim. Its trees are neither young nor old. There is no difference to the eye between the outside of the wall and the inside.

There may be a corner from which some glimpse of the long curving roofs of the palace can be seen, but if there is I did not discover it. The trees are not tall, but they conceal the buildings which squat in their shade. It is clear that the Japanese were not represented at the Tower of Babel.

Within this unpromising wall is a large and scattered group of buildings which form the palace. To these have been added a number of new structures, identical in type, but mostly temporary. All are low—that is to say the effect is one of lowness—and inconspicuous. Some of them are enormous in floor space.

There are, for instance, dining rooms which accommodate two thousand people at once and reception rooms for the same number, and there must be kitchens and all the range of offices necessary for the comfort of a small army of the Emperor's guests, but somehow they have been tucked away, and as the visitor moves about he sees little more than an occasional new temporary gateway or a corridor hung with chrysanthemum and purple banners. One soon loses all notion of direction in the mazes of this vast compound.

The idea of concealed space is one of the strongest impressions of my visit, space created out of nothing and nowhere betraying its presence by some such coup d'œuil as architects of the West love. You passed under innumerable gateways into corridors emptying into stately halls hung with all manner of glowing colors. You found yourself in spacious courtyards where regiments might have drilled. You walked along sumptuous corridors and noticed with amazement the longest dining tables you had ever seen. And as soon as you had left them and walked ten yards nothing was to be seen but a new white wood gateway or so and the thin foliage of the commonplace trees.

The group of archaic ceremonies which the Japanese now lump together by the name of coronation have three main acts as their spinal column. First, the Emperor worships his ancestors and informs them that he is about to ascend the throne; second, he appears in public before his people and by the act declares that he has ascended the throne; third, he offers to his ancestors, who are gods, the first fruits of his reign in the form of offerings of rice and rice wine and other fruits of the land and sea.

The first of the ceremonies began at 9 in the morning of coronation day, November 10. This took place in a setting so plain, so temporary, that it is difficult to convey a description in words, and it was impossible to photograph it in any effective way. In substance all the ceremonies are open air functions. The Emperor is always under cover in temple or ceremonial hall, but the guests and officials are outside.

The courtyard is the unit. Imagine a large courtyard in which a couple of long wooden pavilions have been erected. They are new and white and bare—nothing but a roof and a floor and a few supporting posts. They are seated with benches, unbacked, and covered with white cushions. In the front row of one of those pavilions the envoys of the Powers were placed. I propose to describe what they saw as it was afterward described to me.

"Across the street," of course, they saw the other pavilion, identical down to the last knot in the pine, but filled with Japanese dignitaries in cocked hats and black gold laced coats. In front of the pavilions and between them was a smaller edition of the same—another plain roof covering a sandy floor. This was empty, but on the day after it was the stage of the solemn—the adjective is the official selection, not mine—Mikagura dance to solace the spirits of the departed Emperors.

Beyond this roof and uncomfortably hidden by it was a beautiful little gem of a Japanese temple, brand new and spotless. Within this little temple or shrine the Emperor worshipped his ancestors and read the Imperial Report announcing his accession. But the door of the temple was shut and the envoys saw nothing and heard nothing. They stood in their places and watched the shadows become more vertical on the sandy courtyard as two hours passed without visible incident.

Later it was officially announced that all took place exactly as arranged. At the appointed moment the Emperor, dressed in a kimono of pure white, entered the shrine and dipped his hands in ablutionary water presented by priests. Six trays of food were offered to the spirits amid the beating of gongs and the shrill wailing of reed instruments. An address was read to the shrine by the Grand Master of the Rituals.

His Majesty rose, bowed low before the shrine, and withdrew from the innermost chamber, in which he had been seated alone. All present worshipped before the shrine, the offerings were removed, the doors of the sanctuary were closed and the first part of the great ceremony was over.

His Majesty returned to the residential part of the palace. The foreign ambassadors drove back to their hotels, and the 2,000 Japanese officials who were present were ushered into one of those immense secret dining halls where a lordly luncheon was served.

The afternoon ceremony—the appearance before the representatives of the nation and the foreign Powers—constitutes the coronation proper. It also is essentially an open air function. This custom probably is evidence of the antiquity of the rites. It also seems as though it might reasonably explain the absence of architectural effect.

Every ceremony is held in a courtyard, which when you look at the tangle of trees around, you realize is just a fenced and cleared space. The Emperor with a very few attendants played his part in the Shishinden, another of the templelike structures which sum up ancient Japanese architecture. "Shishinden," literally translated, means the "Hall of Purple Mourning"; it is better described, as the Japanese themselves prefer, simply as the Ceremonial Hall.

One of the peculiarities of this part of the solemnity was that no one could see the whole of it. The Emperor on his throne could not see more than a narrow slit of the courtyard where the most distinguished of his subjects were gathered; none of the subjects except the princes who surrounded the throne could see the Emperor. This was not planned; it was the result of the architectural qualities of the hall with its floor raised high above the ground and its immensely deep roof.

Imagine yourself a "most favored" spectator. You stand just inside the main gate of a large courtyard. Directly in front of you across perhaps two hundred paces of white clean sand is the imperial throne in the Shishinden. You are the outermost of a row of gilt edged notables, nine deep. The last three are covered by the deep eaves of a noble old wall; over yourself and the others is a canopy of splendid heavy silk in broad stripes of pale blue and white.

Around the three sides of the courtyard stretches this human frame. The fourth side is filled up by the bulk of that great and venerable roof which covers the Shishinden. Just under the eaves is an immense piece of silk, stretched tight like a huge signboard. This runs the whole length. It is embroidered in bold grotesque patterns in the five lucky colors—purple, white, red, yellow and green. Beneath this again is a fringe of bamboo blinds, tasselled in red and black.

Looking beyond the bamboo blinds into the interior you see a row of plain wooden pillars and between them a fringe of short curtains edged with bands which are red at one side, black at the other. They are decorated with a design which at first seems merely a floral decoration such as one might see on wall paper, but which is in reality a conventional figuring supposed to represent decayed wood.

This suggestion of age and decay in the midst of imperial splendor is characteristically Japanese. They are sensitive to the incongruous and love it. Nothing pleases their fancy more than the sight of delicate plum blossoms springing from a mouldering trunk.

In the darkness beyond the second row of curtains is the Taka-Mikura or High August Seat, within which is placed the imperial throne. This, as seen from outside, is a square platform of black lacquer, on which is set an octagonal canopy surmounted by phœnixes. The throne is an innovation. In old times the Emperor sat cross legged on the floor. The present ruler sat on a red lacquer chair. The Taka-Mikura occupied the exact middle of the Shishinden. Beside it was a smaller and plainer copy intended for the Empress had her health permitted her to be present.

The court yard, deeply spread with fine gravel, is square and bare, but it supports a riot of color. Two great rows of banners planted in square black lacquer stands run along its whole length, from the steps of the Shishinden to the gateway where you are in your mind's eye surveying the wondrous scene.

Near the gate are ranged twelve drums on stands as high as a man, and about a score of stands support various weapons of old world war—arrows, bows, halberds, swords, shields and so on. Beside each group of munitions a warrior in kimono of scarlet or light blue stands.

Everything is rectangular and balanced, for the Japanese have a passion for mathematical regularity in all ceremonial things. A final delightful touch is the presence of the sacred trees, orange and cherry, balancing each other on either side of the steps leading to the Shishinden.

The picture grows. The gray roof which seemed so overwhelming while the courtyard was empty is forgotten as the eye travels over the brilliant colors which are massing below. On three sides a living frame of decorated and uniformed personages under an awning of blue and white silk. A square sandy court in which are planted rigidly straight rows of gaudy banners and rigidly arranged groups of warriors, drums, gongs, swords and weapons. The great Shishinden with its sweeping roof and under and around it all that is great and powerful in Japan.

Drums sound thrice, and the envoys appear at a side door and enter the Shishinden. Count Okuma takes up his position in front of the throne. When the moment arrives the kaleidoscope of glowing colors ceases to turn, and the picture stands in silent expectancy. Loud cries of "O—sh" are heard, and we know that the Emperor is on his way to the throne though only the envoys and those inside the hall can see him.

He enters the curtained Taka-Mikura, and two gentlemen in waiting step forward and draw the curtains. His Majesty is seen seated on the throne. He wears a robe of dull orange the exact color of the newly risen sun on a summer morning, and holds in his hand a baton of white wood. Count Okuma left the hall and made his way slowly down the courtyard, leaning on the arms of two men. He circumnavigated the banners and marched up the middle, taking up a position at the foot of the steps facing the Emperor. Here he represented the Japanese nation. His Majesty read the imperial rescript in a voice which though audible was not loud. Count Okuma replied. The first sentences were shaky, but presently the veteran orator warmed up and his voice rang through the whole assembly as he asserted the loyalty of the Japanese nation.

At the conclusion of his speech the Premier walked over to the banzai banner and gave three cheers for the Emperor. This was to have been the signal for all Japan to cheer, but somebody had blundered, and before the Count finished speaking the roll of cheers was heard from the immense crowds outside. It was a trifling blemish, due apparently to the fact that the cheering outside was arranged by time instead of by signal. Those banzais concluded the coronation ceremony.

III.

An interval of four days followed, and in them only two small religious ceremonies took place. The first was the dancing before the shrine to solace the spirits of the deceased rulers, the second a very ancient and obscure rite designed at one time to calm the spirits of the living Emperor and fit him to perform the solemn rite of the Dai-Josai. No foreigners and very few Japanese were present at those rites.

The most solemn and mysterious part of the solemnity was held four days after the coronation. The Japanese name for this is the Dai-Josai and it is occasionally translated harvest festival, but it is no more the homely harvest thanksgiving of the West than the mass is a meal. It is traditional, and the source of the rites is lost in the mists that surround the childhood of the race.

The ceremonies are obviously closely related to some of the oldest customs of mankind. Partly they would seem to be a fusion of sacrifice to the unseen powers of the first fruits of the harvest, partly they illustrate the primitive custom of placing food and drink by the grave of the dead chief or father, and partly there is the thought of the Emperor sharing his coronation feast with the divine ancestors of his dynasty.

The rites took place in a range of buildings situated outside of the palace compound but still inside the park. These buildings I have described before. I had a fair notion of what I would see. But I had little notion of the impression of roughness and primitiveness which the actual sight of the buildings would arouse. The others belong to another civilization, another age; these belonged to another world.

The first thing I saw when I visited the place a day or two before the ceremony was a couple of white pavilions outside of the sacred enclosure. In these the Prime Minister and other high officials were to wait and watch while the Emperor celebrated the mysterious rites within. The pavilions were plain enough in all conscience—white sheds with rows of unbacked benches—but the gulf between them and the buildings within the enclosure was unmistakable and immense.

The unplanned, unexpected contrast gave one a sharp realization of the centuries of toil and obscure misery which separated early man from the affluent iron age, when he had learned to make such tools as will smooth and shape wood.

Walls of plaited rushes, roofs of thatch, posts, lintels and ridgepoles of unhewn pine trunks and branches, a maze of thatched open corridors, a few buildings with neither doors nor windows—such is a summary of the general impression got as one stands at the threshold which no unpurified person may cross. Side by side you note the two shrines called Yuki and Suki, in which the Emperor performed an identical ceremony, duplicating it so there may be no error.

The purification building, the bath house in plain modern English, is also easily distinguished. The rest is just a maze of covered passages leading by circuitous routes from one building to another. No one now knows why the Emperor should walk round three sides of the enclosure to reach a place to which three steps would take him. Possibly the explanation is that in the very distant days when the rites were fixed the simple men who devised them knew no other way of adding impressiveness to their primitive pagan ceremony than by lengthening its processes.

No eye of ambassador or nobleman or minister saw the ceremony. Only the Emperor and the princes of his family and the priests and priestesses who had duties in the ritual were permitted inside the enclosure. No foreigners were present in any capacity.

The members of the government and the heads of the army and navy waited through the night in the pavilions I have described. At intervals they heard the strains of reed instruments and saw the glare of pine torches as the Emperor walked from one shrine to another. At the gates of the rush fence which enclosed the shrines warriors with bows and arrows sat all night long around watchfires.

The public of Kyoto came and went and enjoyed their holiday in the usual way. Shrines were carried about the streets, tea houses did a roaring or rather a silent trade, one or two strayed revellers might have been met in the evening hours. In the park of the palace all was silence and mystery as the leaders of modern Japan waited in wooden shelters outside the gates of the fenced space in the wood where their Emperor performed the most ancient state ceremony left on earth.

The ceremony began just before sundown and closed just before sunrise. It is purely Shinto and Japanese and has apparently no admixture of foreign (that is, Chinese or Buddhist) influence. On the whole, judging from many conversations which I have had with Japanese, I come to the conclusion that the Dai-Josai has become but a ceremony. It is a thing of rituals and ancient, half understood observances. In this it differs from the acts of ancestor worship performed in connection with the other rites, for ancestor worship is still a living thing in Japan and is well understood by the people. The Dai-Josai goes too far back.

The feast begins with the placing of offerings in the sanctuary. The consecrated lights are lit and the temple is made ready for the Emperor, who, when the hour comes, takes an ablutionary bath. He is clothed in white, and, baton in hand, he proceeds to the first of the twin shrines.

Attendants light his way with pine torches and unroll bamboo matting under his feet as he passes. The sacred sword and jewel are carried on his right and left and a man carries an umbrella made of reeds and suspended from the beak of a brazen phœnix above his head. Songs connected with the harvest are sung and dances are performed emblematic of gathering in the grain.

This completed, the Emperor makes obeisance to the sacred treasures and the princes follow his example. Then begins the second part of the rite. Offerings are carried in and laid before the shrine—a strange and picturesque business.

In quick succession a stream of priests and priestesses take in food and drink for the gods and a very varied assortment of primitive accessories such as a towel box, a fresh rush mat for the food of the gods and another for the food of the Emperor, a pair of chopsticks, a box of rice and millet, bowls of seaweed broth, articles of clothing—all the materials for a feast of primitive man. To the sound of weird music the Emperor enters the shrine and dips his hands in consecrated water. A curtain screens the inner sanctuary from every eye while he offers the feast to the gods and partakes of it himself.

According to the regulations which fix each detail of this as of every ceremony connected with the coronation his Majesty must eat four helpings of the rice and drink eight cups of sake. It is fair to add that the Japanese sake cups are not much larger than a thimble. One wonders from a respectful distance what are the feelings of this young ruler, who has had a modern education and is reputed to be sensitive to modern thoughts, when he sits behind the curtain sacrificing to the gods of early man and feasting with them. It is a moment for reflection and awe.

IV.

And now the solemnities are over and the rest is feasting. Yesterday, November 14, his Majesty gave the first of the coronation banquets. Some 2,500 people were invited, including the foreign envoys. They dined off rice and fish and black and white rice wine. The record is silent as to how they fared on these primitive viands. Tomorrow they may redress the balance, for another banquet will be given in the most sumptuous style known to the Orient.

The envoys have seen many strange sights since they came to this old city ten days ago. Last night's was not the least wonderful and perhaps it was the most surprising. They knew what they were to expect at the coronation, but no one had whispered that they would find an Aladdin's palace conjured into existence for the feast of a single night. The magician who performed this feat is Mr. Katayama, chief of the construction bureau of the imperial household, and the success with which he grafted the new on the old and created a picture which without violating Japanese taste rivalled the west in imperial splendor deserves that he should be known.

The banqueting hall in the compound of the Nijo Palace, the old residence of the Shoguns, and the guests entered by the old palace gate. Generally what you see when you enter a Japanese palace is this: You go up a few steps and past a sliding door (having taken your boots off) and along a corridor of which the breadth and height are about equal. Along the corridor more sliding doors open into apartments somewhat low and gloomy, lighted from paper windows on the outside of the corridor.

The floors are polished, the woodwork is exquisite, the gold plated bosses and fittings of the sliding doors are marvellously delicate. The background is of venerable and faded gold, on which some Kano or Ogata has painted a thousand year old pine tree. And so on.

One shuffles along endless corridors admiring in the half light a picture gallery of exquisite doors and screens, and is filled with respect for the artist craftsmen of Old Japan. But there is a lurking conviction that those old Shoguns made their splendors needlessly gloomy, and it is a relief when the cicerone opens a shoji, or paper window, and gives one a fascinating glimpse of a Japanese garden, so still, so trim, a world of beauty in a small space.

Gloom—for what may pass in the hours of daylight for a dim, religious light is pure gloom when the sun has set—was an inevitable feature of a glassless land in the past. But gloom has no excuse in the present century. It flies at the touch of a switch. Mr. Katayama has lighted the old palace, and the effect is revolutionary. Instead of gloomy splendor you have splendor with its proper adjuncts, space and light.

The old gold of the screens glows in the radiance of electric light lamps; the old wood takes on a new lustre; the exquisite metalwork gets its full value in the decorative scheme. The palace was transformed. Last night when every salon was thronged with guests it presented a picture of statelliness and dignity which no Western palace could surpass.

The rooms of the old palace were used as reception rooms, the various salons being allotted according to rank—members of the Diet in one (pretty near the door), members of the House of Peers in another, princes in a third, envoys in a fourth, and so on. From these the guests proceeded to the banqueting hall, the new building which has been grafted on the old.

There is a long progress through the passages of the old palace, and eventually there is a point at which the corridors become new. But the character and dimensions are preserved. The decorations of metal are new, the carpet on the floor is less thick, the coffered roof is ornamented in a different pattern, but it is still the same square corridor that it has been since you entered.

At the end, of course, is the banqueting hall—a large lofty apartment whose fine proportions arrest the visitor. At first it appears as an oblong, then you observe that the oblong has wings (in the architectural sense) something like an E without the middle stroke. It is in fact a hall within a hall. The banqueting room is an immense square, inside of which is set a lovely room devoted to the ancient dances with which the Emperor will entertain his guests. The smaller hall, like the larger, is exactly square.

In the middle is a square dancing platform. Facing it is a dais on which the throne is set. At the opposite end is a platform for the musicians. Between the musicians and the platform are two enormous drums on stands something like an inverted heart of the conventional shape. One of the drums bears the familiar design of the triple Tomoe (three commas locked together as if they were whirling in a vortex), the other has a double tomoe. The roof is lofty and the height of the walls is gracefully broken by a light balcony of plain wood.

All the wood seen is plain white and the harmony with which it is blended into a stately color scheme is a revelation. The walls are panelled in tapestry with a bold red design. The seats are covered with crimson velvet. The carpet is of the same shade but the rougher material makes a striking foil for the rich shade of the velvet. The curtains around are of copper red silk, heavily brocaded.

Behind the musicians in the exact centre of the hall is a silk hanging of broad alternate stripes of scarlet and black. Under the balcony of unpainted wood which runs round the walls are panels of open wood carving representing the signs of the Zodiac and various Japanese flowers.

This catalogue conveys but a poor idea of the warmth and splendor of a place which seems to combine very happily the characteristic qualities of East and West. From the West come the lofty roof and the brilliant light and the crimson velvet of the benches is borrowed from the English House of Lords. The plain white wood, the flaming drums, the vivid black and scarlet hangings, the bold carvings are Japanese. To blend them into a stately harmony was a great achievement, and it formed, as I said, the last surprise of the visitors, who did not expect to find a fairy palace reared for the feast of a night.

But the decree of destruction is irrevocable, and indeed is necessary, for the structure has not been planned for ages eternal, and economy was studied as well as effect. In a few days it will be demolished and the grass will grow next spring where the Emperor and the envoys of the great Powers feasted.